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EXPLORING THE OPPORTUNITIES OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AS A PROSPECT FOR MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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Abstract
The working of federal system of government depends on the harmonious interactions and relationships between and among the tiers of government - federal, states and local governments. Therefore, healthy interactions and relationships amongst the tiers of government would help greatly in the management of conflict especially over jurisdictional exercise of powers and functions. This study is aimed to explore the opportunities of Intergovernmental relations (IGR)as a prospect for management of conflict in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It is desk review research in which secondary sources of data collection and content analysis were employed in the study. Theory of accountability as advanced by Mark Philp on the concept of accountability and its relationship to political legitimacy guided the theoretical exposition of the study. In one of the findings of the study, it was revealed that healthy working relationships among the levels of government would not only manage conflict but also help to enhance the efficiency of government in service delivery, resource sharing and collaboration, attract investment, as well as promote economic growth and development. It was recommended that strict adherence to the provision of the 1999 Constitution as amended through the promotion of collaborative working relationships with strong institutions, structure and men would help make the government build trust and confidence on the people for its actions and decision-making.

Keywords: Accountability; Conflict Resolution; Intergovernmental Relations; Opportunities; Prospect.

Introduction

Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) is primarily a mechanism for managing conflicts and delivering services. Therefore, the meaning of IGR remains elusive when the concept of conflict is not given attention its deserved especially when the issue is about the interactions and relationships between and amongst the levels of government.

Basically, conflict exists in every human endeavours as a result of unavoidable interactions and relationships between individuals as well as groups, tiers and agencies of government differences in society over aspirations, expectations or achievements of benefits. Thus, conflict is ubiquitous that cannot be eradicated no matter how homogeneous or heterogenous the society is classified but can be managed.

Nigeria and many other heterogenous societies operated a federal system government with varied tiers of government. Each tier of government interacts and relates with each other in

the exercise of powers and functions as provided in the constitution. This is to ascertain that the constitution guides the operations of the federal arrangement as its spelt out the governmental powers and functions which each can exercise and can seek redress in the court when any of its powers and functions denied or overlapped to exercise by the other tier in the country.

For instance, Nigeria has three tiers of government - federal, state and local government in which the working of its federal government is not limited to federal - state - local relations but also federal - state relations; federal - local relations; state -state relations; state - local relations; and local - local relations. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) make provisions to the effect. Part I of the second schedule deals with the exclusive legislative lists, Part II of the same schedule make for concurrent legislative lists, the Fourth schedule states the functions of local government council in Nigeria, etc.

The paper argues that effective IGR is not only a strategy meant to manage conflict but also expected to make accountability holdees and holders accountable for the performance and consequences of government policies across all the levels of governance as well as helps to create opportunities for the growth and development of the country. Finally, the paper is divided into six parts. Parts one deals with the general introduction on what the paper is about. In part two the keywords that give meaning to the main thrust of the paper are defined and explained. Part three provides the theoretical exposition that guide the discussion of the paper. Opportunities of IGR to conflict management in Nigeria makes the fourth part of the paper. In part five, ways of managing conflicts in Nigeria are examined. The last part deals with conclusion and policy recommendations.

Clarification of Key concepts

Intergovernmental Relations

The term intergovernmental relations (IGR) was originated from a federal society United States of America in 1930s. It is argued to be practiced in all system of government (i.e. Unitary, Federal and Confederal) but it is most common in federal system.

IGRs, basically a mechanism for managing conflict and delivering services therefore as Nigeria used the framework of federalism to manage her conflicts, she has found that IGR is a necessary mechanism to promote cooperation, manage conflicts, respond to changing circumstances and deliver services more effectively.

Similarly, the term IGR, is often used by many scholars to refer to relations between and/or among central, state and local governments, as well as government between any one level that facilitate the attainment of common goals through cooperation (Opeskin 2001 cited in Lawson 2011, p.199). IGR may also be defined as the complex pattern of interview, coordination and inter-dependence between two or more levels of government.

In his contributions to the definition of the term IGR, Cameron (2001) defines IGR as the workhorse of any federal system, it is the privileged instrument by which the job whatever job gets done. Thus, IGR operates at the interface between what the constitution provides and what the practical reality of the country requires. More specifically, the workings of the federal system are often called IGR. Therefore, we can deduce that, there is no federalism without IGRs because it is the link that makes federal arrangement works.

Generally, IGR involves all the interactions that take place among different levels of government within a country. Thus, the relationship between levels of government is formally spelt-out in the constitutions. This is to ascertain that constitution guides the

operations of federal arrangements, as it's spelt-out the governmental powers and functions which each tier of government can exercise to cement the harmonious interaction between and among the tiers of government in a federation.

IGR, cover all set of interaction among federal, state and local governments, and as such, supposed to play a bridge building rate to being a degree of coordination and cooperation to divided power (Okafor 2001, p116).

School of Thoughts on Intergovernmental Relations (IGR)

For a proper clarification of the term IGR and its applicability on the systems of government, three school of Thoughts have developed as follows: -

The first School argues that IGRs can only exist in a federal system. This is in line with the view of Graves (1974) who says that "IGR is synonymous with federalism that there is no federalism without IGRs to the extent that IGR recognized that only interactions among federal, state and local governments but also federal – state relations; federal – local relation; inter-sate relations; state- local relations and inter – local relations.

The second school of thought content that IGR can both exist within a federal structure and as well as a unitary system of government. Example, centre -state governments relations; inter-local relations; and external relations.

The third school posits that IGRs, could as well include international relations (Bamgbose 2008 cited in Bello 2014, p66). This school is in support of the view that, "no nations is an island on itself". Therefore, for a nation to survive it most interact with other nations of the world. For instance, Nigeria has abundant natural resources both actual and potential, but it is lagging in technological advancement. Therefore, Nigeria must look and interact with countries that are technologically advance like Japan, China, India, USA etc.

However, the above argument was challenged by Ayoade (nd) that the literature of IGR excludes the relation between two favoring states because the emphasis is on domestic rather than diplomatic relations. That, diplomatic relations constitute a separate kind of political relationship rather than a level of IGRs.

Objectives of IGR

There are broad and specific objectives of Inter-governmental relations as follows: -

A. Broad objectives of IGR Inter- Governmental Relations are mechanism for measuring conflict and delivering services. Therefore, its broad objectives.
   1. To promote cooperation among governmental Units Federal, State and Local Government.
   2. To recognize and manage conflict.
   3. To deliver services more efficiently, and
   4. To respond to changing circumstances.

B. **Specific Objectives of IGR**
   i. To accelerate the achievement of self-reliant economy.
   ii. To ensure effective and efficiently utilization of available human and material resources among the various tiers of government.
   iii. To promote people and harmony among the tiers of government.
   iv. To minimize inter jurisdictional conflict among the tiers of government.

5. To solve the problem of rural and urban poverty ignorance and suffering of the people.
6. To enhance and promote the emergence of cooperative rather than competitive federalism.
7. To foster greater national integration through the activities of the three levels of government.

Conflict

Scholars have defined the concept of conflict in different ways, as thus: According to Wallensteen (2002) conflict is generally defined as a situation in which two or more parties strive to acquire the Same scarce resources at the same time. In this regard, conflict is seen as a manifestation of hostile attitude in face of conflicting interests between individuals, groups or sates. These conflicting interests can be over resources, identity, power, status, or values.

Swanstrom and Weissmann (2005) defined conflict as a perceived differences in issue position between two or more parties at the same moment. Similarly, conflict is a contradiction arising from differences in interests, ideas, needs, orientations, perceptions and tendencies (Nnoli, 1998).

Similarly, conflict is conceived largely as the expression of opposing interests. Thus, conflict means a state of open, prolonged fighting; belligerency, confrontation, hostility, strife, struggle, war, warfare, etc. a state of disagreement and disharmony; clash, contention, difference, dissonance, faction, fiction schism, strife, variance, etc. (Igwe, 2002).

Conflict can be defined within the context of intergovernmental relations as a state of tension which exist between and among the Central (Federal) - State - Local Government relationship, when perceive their goals, needs, desires and expectations have been hindered or blocked by the other tier of government.

Generally, no matter how the concept of conflict is conceptualized, it deduces five stages as identified by Fisher, et. al (2006 cited in Gambo 2016, p.114) as follows:

1. **Pre-conflict stage:** this primarily refers to a stage or period when goals between parties are incompatible, which would lead to open conflict. At this stage communication between the parties has deteriorated but conflict situation remains largely latent.

2. **Confrontational stage:** at this stage the conflict has become manifest or open. It is characterized by occasional fighting, low level of violence, and search for allies by parties. Mobilization of resources, strained relations and polarization.

3. **Stage of crisis:** this represents the peak of the conflict. In violent conflict, this represents the stage of war and intense fighting, leading to killings, injuries, large scale population displacements, and the use of small arms and light weapons.

4. **Outcome stage:** indeed, all conflicts naturally pass through this stage. With the outcome of the conflict tilting in favour of one party, or even if a ceasefire was declared or negotiated, the critical issue henceforth is that the violence is decreased, which allows rooms for some discussion to commence, or alternative means of settling the conflict.

5. **Post-conflict stage:** here, violence has either ended or significantly reduced, and the politics have gone past the crisis stage. Fisher, et. al (2006) remarked that at this point underlying causes of the conflict are addressed, and that if not properly tackled, the conflict

cycle may be re-enacted and a return to the pre-conflict stage, with consequent re-eruption of violence, becomes a possibility.

Classification of Conflict

Conflict may be classified into two: Violent and Non-violent conflicts. Violent conflict brings about loss of lives and destruction of properties e.g. student's unrest, Niger-Delta militia, Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping and so forth. While non-violent conflict is considered as natural and bring about innovation and change in the society e.g. smooth change of government. However, these two forms of conflict have evolved three different perspectives, or school of thoughts about conflict as suggested by Verma (1998).

There are three perspectives or school of thoughts on conflict, namely, the traditional view, the human relations view and the interactionist view.

The Traditional School

The traditional view on conflict assumed that all conflicts are bad and must be avoided. This school of thought viewed conflict negatively and used it as synonymously as such terms like violence, destruction and irrationality to reinforce its negative connotation. This is to say that any conflict that brings about loss of lives and destruction of property is bad and should be avoided. The confrontational attitude of militant groups in the Niger-Delta area, the Boko Haram insurgency, Farmers-Herdsmen crisis, kidnapping, and so forth are good examples of conflict that are bad and must be avoided because they bring about loss of lives and destruction of properties.

The Human Relations School

This school of conflict as the name implies, assumed that conflict is natural in an organization be it formal or informal, private or public. The human relations school emphasizes conflict is inevitable and has a natural occurrence in all groups and organizations based on the condition that, conflict cannot be eliminated and there are even times when it may benefit a group's performance. For example, wherever interactions exist between and among tiers of government over exercise of powers, conflict must emerge.

The Interactionist School

This school of thought assumed that conflict is not only natural and good, but it must be encouraged. This is to say conflict is not only a positive force in a group, but it is necessary for a group to perform effectively. They argued that conflict should be encouraged on the ground that a harmonious, peaceful, tranquil, and cooperative group is prone to become static, apathetic, and non-responsive to needs for change and innovation. The primary position of this school of thought is that any conflict that brings about innovation and change should be encouraged and opposed any form of conflict that brings about loss of lives and properties.

Theoretical Explanation of the Paper

Theory of accountability was as advanced by Mark Phlip in his work the concept of accountability and its relationship to political legitimacy was adopted to guide the discussion on the opportunities of Intergovernmental relations (IGR) as a prospect for management of conflict in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Some other notable contributors of theory include Ruth Grant, Robert Keohane, Joseph Nye, etc. and their individual works; concept of accountability in the context of democratic governance; accountability in international organizations; and the concept of accountability in the context of global governance respectively.

By accountability in the context of intergovernmental relations according to Weber (1999) in the Grassroots Ecosystem Management (GREM) implies shared authority between levels of government, and between government and citizens.

The main thrust of the theory is that people have constitutional obligation to make their elected representatives accountable for the government policy success and/or failure in democratic governance. Since they are the ones that give them mandate through voting to govern on their behalf. As Philp (2009) argues that accountability is a crucial element of democratic legitimacy, as it empowers citizens to hold their leaders responsible.

However, in the accountability discourse two actors played symbiotic roles. The actors as named by Behn (2001 cited in Hanberger 2006, p.6) referred to those that can be held to account as the accountability holdees, and their counterpart, that is those holding them to account, the accountability holders.

Theory is significant because it will help to: (a) justify the workability of IGR through the citizens participation and engagement in the public fora to have voice in decision-making on issues that affect their localities, states and the country at large. (b) ensure that citizens not only have the constitutional right to air their grievances on the poor performance of government but also a democratic obligation on what is required to influence reciprocal accountability wherein they are all involved to hold one another answerable for specific commitment and activities in realization of set objectives which bring them together. (c) create room for clear and accessible information on government activities that help to promote good governance, transparency and responsiveness.

Opportunities of Intergovernmental Relations to Conflict Management in Nigeria

Many factors such as constitutional, institutional, political, economic, social and to large extent environmental played significant roles to the opportunities of intergovernmental relations to conflict management in Nigeria. The explanations of the factors are provided as follows:

Constitutional Opportunity

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended makes provisions for some governmental powers and functions to be exercised by the tiers of government – federal, state and Local Government as thus: -

1. **Exclusive Legislature lists:** there are these powers which are restricted to the Federal Government to legislate upon. In part I of the second schedules of the 1999 constitutions, sixty-eight (68) of such items listed included in the list are:
    a. Accounts of the aims of the federation
    b. Arms, ammunition and explosives
    c. Aviation (inclusive of airports)
    d. Awards an honour of decoration
    e. Borrowing money inside and outside Nigeria for the purpose of federation or any other state
    f. Censes'
    g. Citizenship
    h. Copyright
    i. Creation of states
    j. Currency, coinage and legal tender
    k. Defence, diplomatic and consider and trade representation
    l. Election to office of president and vice president, governor or deputy governor
    m. External affairs

n. Extradition
o. Nuclear energy
p. Passports and visas, etc.

2. **Concurrent legislature lists:** these are governmental powers in which, both the federal and state government could exercise jointly. In part II of the Second schedule, thirty (30) items were listed. These include: -
   a. Allocation of revenue
   ii. The divisions of public revenue between federation and the states; among the states of the federation; between the government councils in the states.
   iii. Grants or loans
   b. Electoral Law
   c. Statistics scientific and technological research
   d Electric power
   e University and other post primary institutions etc.

3. **Residual Power:** these are those powers which are neither exclusive nor concurrent. Therefore, any items which are not either on the exclusive or concurrent lists are residual and belong to the states. Items such as local government and chieftaincy matters, primary education, community development etc. are residual in nature.

4. **Local Government functions:** the fourth schedule of the 1999 constitution states the functions of a local government council in Nigeria as follows

a. The consideration and making of recommendations to a state commission on economic planning or any similar body on;
   i. The economic development of the state, particularly in so far as the areas of authority of the council and of the state are affected and

   ii. Proposals made by the said commission or body;

b. Collections of rates, ration and television licenses
c. establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial ground and homes for the destitute or infirm.
d. Licensing of bicycles trucks (other than mechanically propelled trucks), census, wheelbarrows and carts;
e. Establishment, maintenance and regulation of slaughterhouses, slaughter slabs, markets, motor parks and public conveniences
f. Construction and maintenance of roads, treats, street highlight drains and other public highways, parts, garden, open spaces, or such public facilities as many be prescribed from time to time by house of Assembly of the state.
g. naming of roads and street and numbering of houses,
h. provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage, and refuse disposal
i. registrations of all births, death and marriages
j Assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the houses of Assembly of a state' and
k. Control and regulation of:
   i. outdoor advertising and loading
   ii. Movement and keeping of pets of all description
   iii. shops and kiosks
   iv. Restaurants bakeries and other places for sale of food to the public
   v. laundries and
   vi. Licensing, regulation and control of the sale of liquor

The Functions of a Local Government council shall include participation of such council in the Government of a state as respects the following matters.

a. The provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education.
b. The development of agriculture and natural resources, other than the exploitations of minerals;
c. The provision and maintenance of health services; and
d. Such other functions as may be conferred on a local government council by the House of Assembly of the state.

Institutional Opportunity

In federal systems like that of Nigeria, there are several institutional bodies through which IGR can be carried out, Oluwu and Ayo (1997 cited in Egwaikhide, et.al 2004, P.68 identified and classified the machinery for promoting IGR and cooperation in Nigeria into three, viz, Constitutional, Statutory and ad hoc bodies.

Constitutional Bodies

These are bodies which provisions are made in the 1999 Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to promote intergovernmental functions such as contained in the third schedule, Part I; Federal Executive Bodies (Established by section 153 (A. – N) as follows: -

A. Code of Conduct Bureau
B. Council of State
C. Federal Character Commission
D. Federal Civil Service Commission
E. Federal Judicial Service Commission
F. Independent National Electoral Commission
G. National Defence Council
H. National Economic Council
I. National Judicial Council
J. National Population Commission
K. National Security Council
L. Nigerian Police council
M. Police Service Commission
N. Revenue Mobilizations Allocation and Fiscal Commission

Part II States Executive Bodies (Established by section 197)

A. State Civil Service Commission
B. State Independent Electoral Commission
C. State Judicial Service Commission

Part III Federal Capital Territory, Abuja Executive Body (Established under section 304)

A. Judicial service committee of the federal Capital Territory Abuja

Fourth Schedule: Section 7 – function of a local Government council

Furthermore, the Constitution in section 4(1) clearly states that there shall be a National Assembly for the federation which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives. Representing the whole federation based on population in the House of Representatives and based on equality of states in the Senate.

There is also provision for a supreme court which has the final power or arbitration in civil, criminal and Institutional matters.

Statutory Bodies

These are bodies of intergovernmental institutions that are backed by law, promulgated and established under the military rule. The Examples are:

i. The National Youths Service Corps (NYSC) which was established by a decree in 1973, and the purpose has been to promote national unity, loyalty and the spirit of national service in Nigerian Youths
ii. The National Alleviation Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)
iii. National Directorate of Employment (NDE)
iv. Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) now UTME
v. The National Council on Intergovernmental Relations (NCIR) established in July 1992 to closely monitor the operation of the Federal system, giving continuing attention to NCIR in the Nigerian Federal system, study, conduct research and maintain data recommend solution to problems of IGR and necessary forms of improvement, play mandatory roles in resolving conflict and establish contexts with other organizations with similar objectives.

Ad hoc or Informal Bodies

These are bodies constituted by government for a specific task they include:

1. The meetings of Accountant Generals of all the state of the federation;
2. The 36 speakers of Assembly in Nigeria;
3. The 19 Northern Governors forum;
4. The 17 Southern Governors forum;
5. The zonal meetings through their representative governors, as well as
6. The council meeting of diverse federal and state ministries on key subjects such as personnel education and finance; and,
7. The meetings of local government chairmen.

Political Opportunity

The twenty-five-year successful transition of democratic governance in Nigeria is key to the sustainability of the roles of intergovernmental relations to the creation of more opportunities to citizens to participate in decision-making processes and in the management of electoral violence in the country. The citizens are now fully aware that their votes are counts to elect credible candidate into office and vote them out of office whenever failed to shoulder their responsibilities as they promised to fulfil during the electioneering campaigns. This opportunity will help greatly the government improve on delivery of public services, such education, healthcare and infrastructure. Similarly, the IGR will help politically to facilitate the decentralization of power and devolution of responsibilities by allowing the states and local governments to take ownership of development initiatives.

Economic Opportunity

The IGRs create opportunities for resource sharing and collaboration of experts in knowledge sharing between governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders to help the government tackle development challenges more effectively. By so doing, it will attract domestic and foreign investments, promote economic growth and enhance competitiveness in the economic sector of the country. This by extension, promote cooperation and coordination among different levels of government by creating more job and investment opportunities.

Social Opportunity

IGR will help promotes social co-existence, justice and equity amongst all the tiers of government by ensuring that all citizens have access to social welfare programmes such as education, healthcare facilities and infrastructural development.

Environmental Opportunity

Effective IGRs will help governments across all levels to work together to address environmental challenges, such as climate change, air pollution, and conservation of natural resources. For instance, Nigeria has abundant natural resources but actual and potential whereby the role of IGR will help harness the resources to its maximum capacity.

Ways of Managing Conflict in Intergovernmental Relations

Conflict is inevitable and cannot be eradicated in intergovernmental relations but can be managed. Therefore, the ways of managing conflict in IGR include the following:

Avoidance Approach

This deals with ability of doing the right things at the right time and avoiding bad things in achieving organizational goals and objectives. This approach is used to minimize the possibility of escalating conflict. For instance, if all tiers of government are shouldering their constitutional responsibilities, conflict that brings about loss of lives and destruction of properties will be managed.

Consensus Approach

This is the settlement of conflict in terms of negotiations, mediations and reconciliations. This form of managing conflict is otherwise referred to compromised approach, which is based on a give and take process and typically involves negotiation and a series of concession. This approach is commonly used and widely accepted as an effective way of managing conflict in intergovernmental relations.

Coercive Approach

This deals with the management of conflict by coercive actions, e.g. force. This involves elements of power and dominance by the government to manage conflict. For example, federal government of Nigeria is using an element of force to deal with confrontational attitudes of the militants' groups in the Niger-Delta, Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, kidnapping menace across the states in the country, etc.

Adjudicative Approach

This is the way of managing conflict by court. This is to say that conflict may likely arise in the exercise of governmental powers and functions between or among the tiers of government, especially in interpretation of constitution, supreme court should be the last resort for the tiers of government to take their case. The case of Lagos state and Katsina state versus the federal government over creation of additional local governments is a good example. The state governments considered with they did as constitutional while the federal government considered what Lagos and Katsina State governments did as unconstitutional. Hence, supreme court played the role of managing the existed conflict over jurisdictional of creation of local government.

Enlightenment

Government and Non-governmental Organizations including Civil Society Organizations help greatly on their emphasis on the use of reason and rational thinking to understand the menace of conflict and its management in human progress and ability to improve the society live in peace through education, science, and reform.

Conclusion

The opportunities of Intergovernmental relations under democratic governance both constitutionally, institutionally, politically, economically, socially and environmentally are without any doubt serve as strategies for making the levels of government work within the provision of the constitution which in turn would help greatly in resolving conflicts and promote peace building and stability in the country. Ultimately, the interactions and relations promoted by IGR between and among the tiers of government remain crucial for Nigeria's governance, stability, economic growth and development.

However, the modus operandi of IGR globally makes for all the tiers of government to work within their areas of jurisdictions with a clear separation of powers and functions as well as checks and balances. For this reason, strict adherence to the IGR modus operandi would not only manage conflict but also promote national cohesion, integration, and development.

It was established in the paper that conflict is a natural phenomenon that is unavoidable if human relationships are involved but can be managed effectively. That, conflict is ubiquitous as there was conflict even within human body systems as well as between and among the tiers of government.

The paper also revealed that accountability is a collective responsibility the accountability holdees and the accountability holders. That, between each of government and between the government and the citizens.

Finally, the in its major findings revealed that healthy working relationships among the tiers of government would not only manage conflict but also help to enhance the efficiency of government in service delivery, resource sharing and collaboration with experts in knowledge sharing that will attract investment both domestic and foreign, as well as promote economic growth and development. It was recommended that strict adherence to the provision of the 1999 Constitution as amended through the promotion of collaborative working relationships with strong institutions, structure and men would help make the government build trust and confidence on the people for its actions and decision-making.

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